

The 1968 Tet Offensive

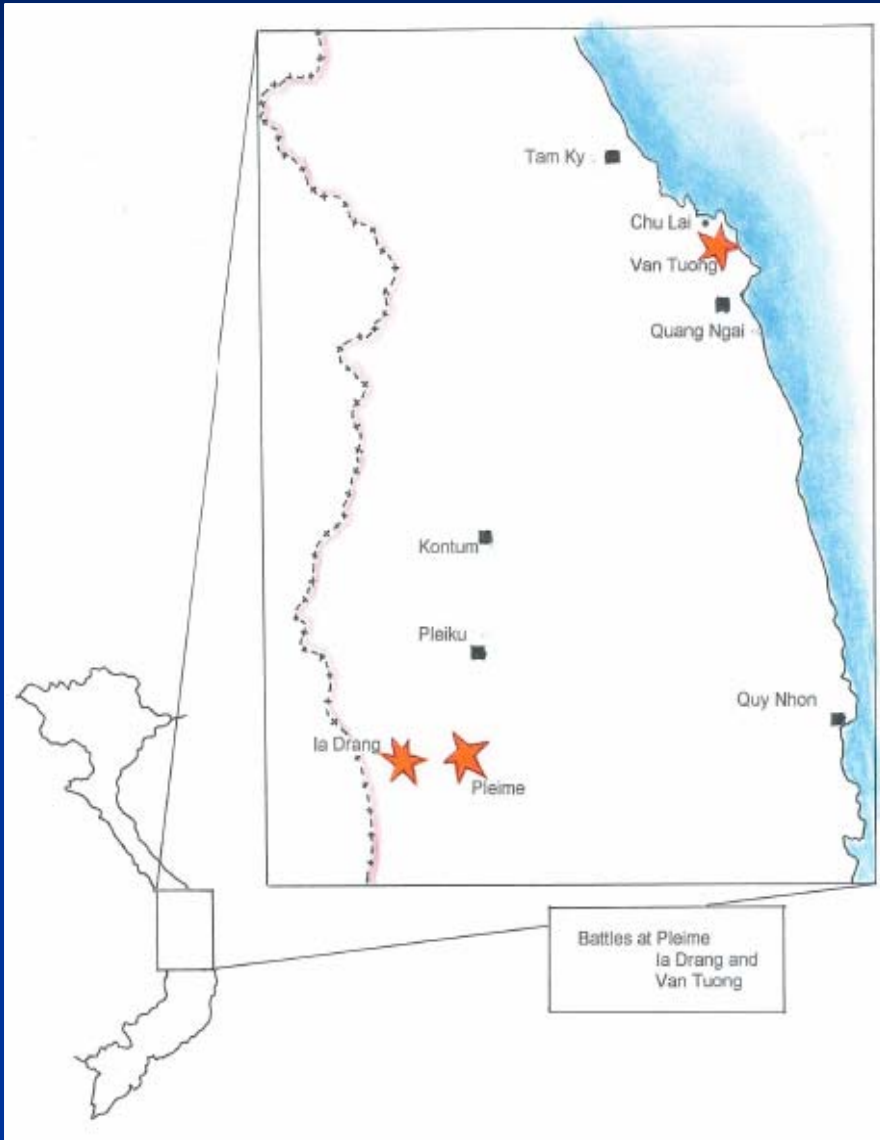
by Ky Quy Vu

February 25, 2008

Agenda

- Prelude to the Tet Offensive
- The Concerted Attack
- The Military Consequence
- The Political Consequence
- Conclusion

PRELUDE: Stalled momentum in 1965



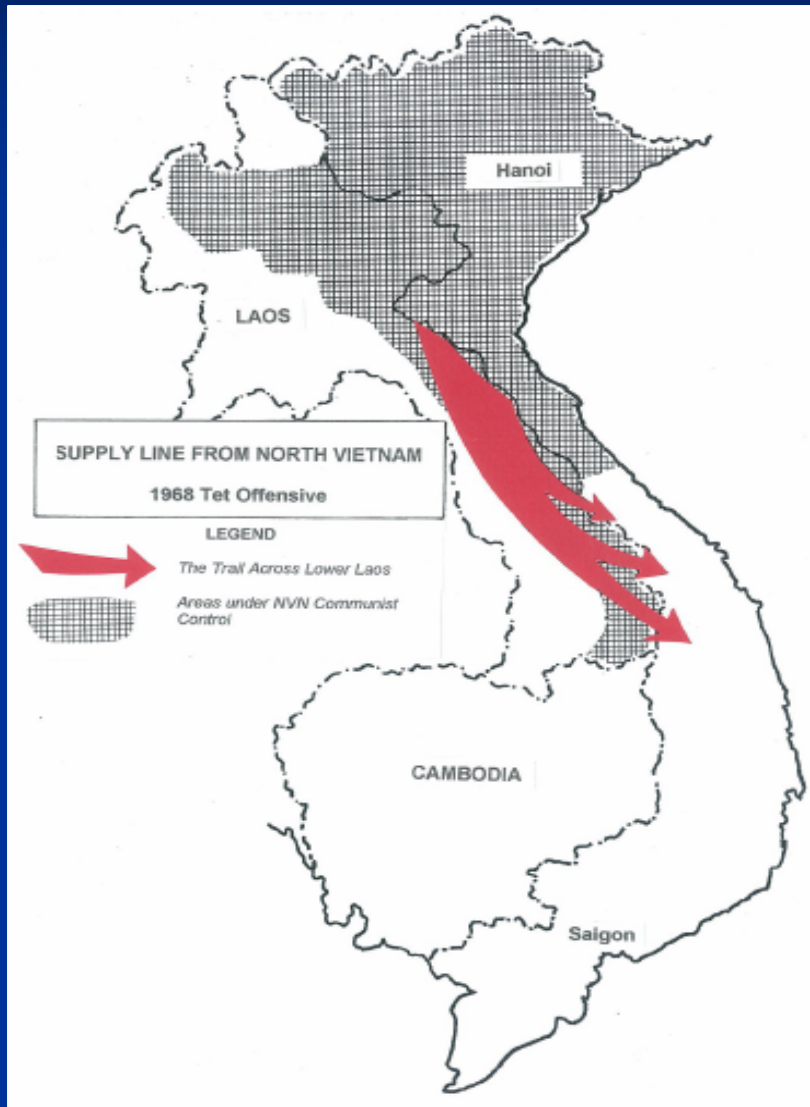
Set Battles

- Communists decision to hold ground
- Engagements of regiment size
- The Communists failure, heavy losses

Major operations Into Communist strongholds

- Denying enemy sanctuary
- Denying chance attack
- Sapping enemy supply ability

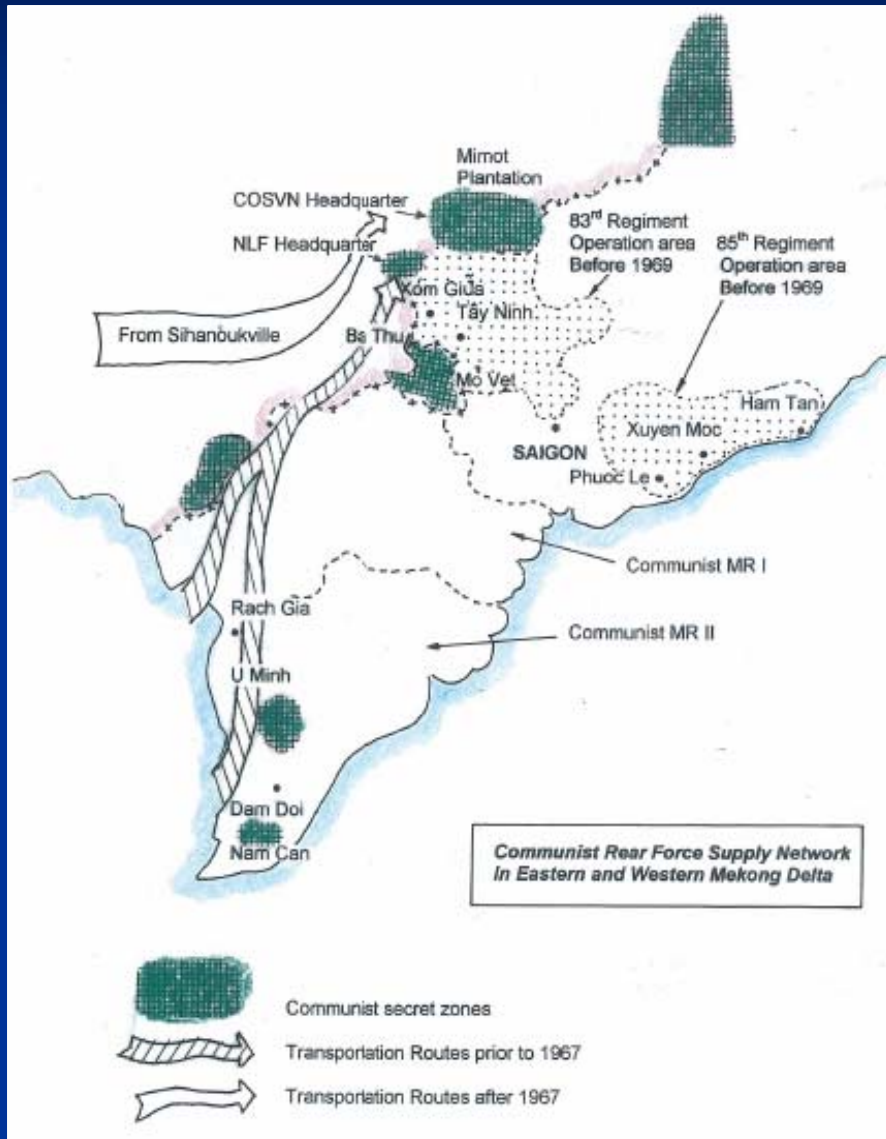
PRELUDE – Capability: Supply from North



■ Infiltration from North Vietnam:

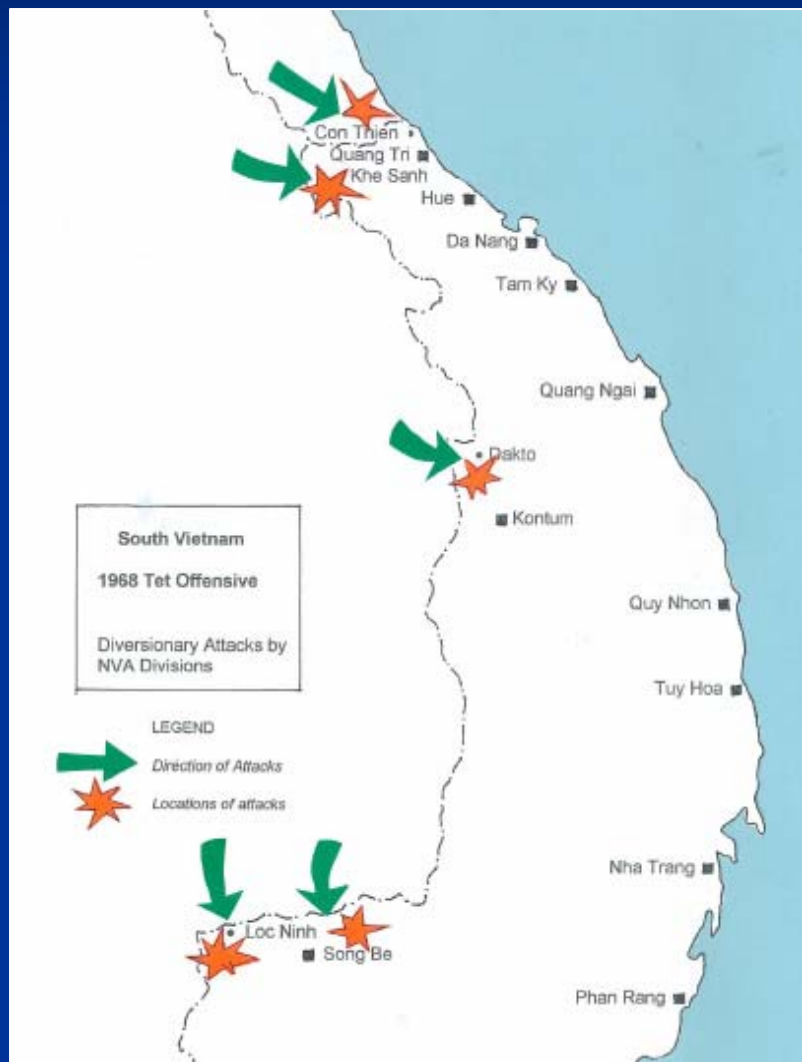
- 4,500 troops monthly
- More than 22,300 tons of supplies before Tet

PRELUDE - Capability: Infrastructure



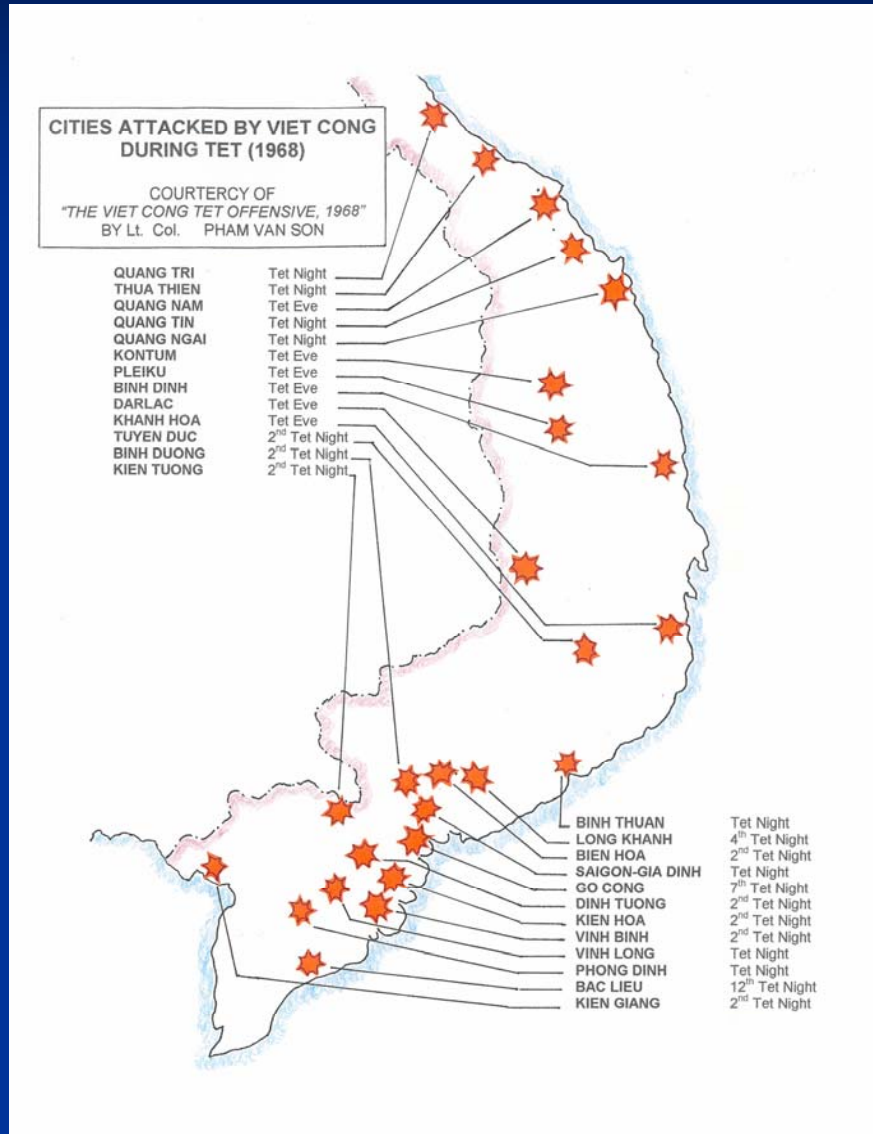
- Infrastructure intact in SVN
- Logistic system in Mekong Delta
- Financial Support

OFFENSIVE: Diversionary Attacks



- The siege of Khe Sanh
- The attacks at border outposts
- The final attacks at Khe Sanh
- Failure to distract American defense
- Psi-war succeeded in distracting SVN

OFFENSIVE - All Out Attacks: Go for Broke



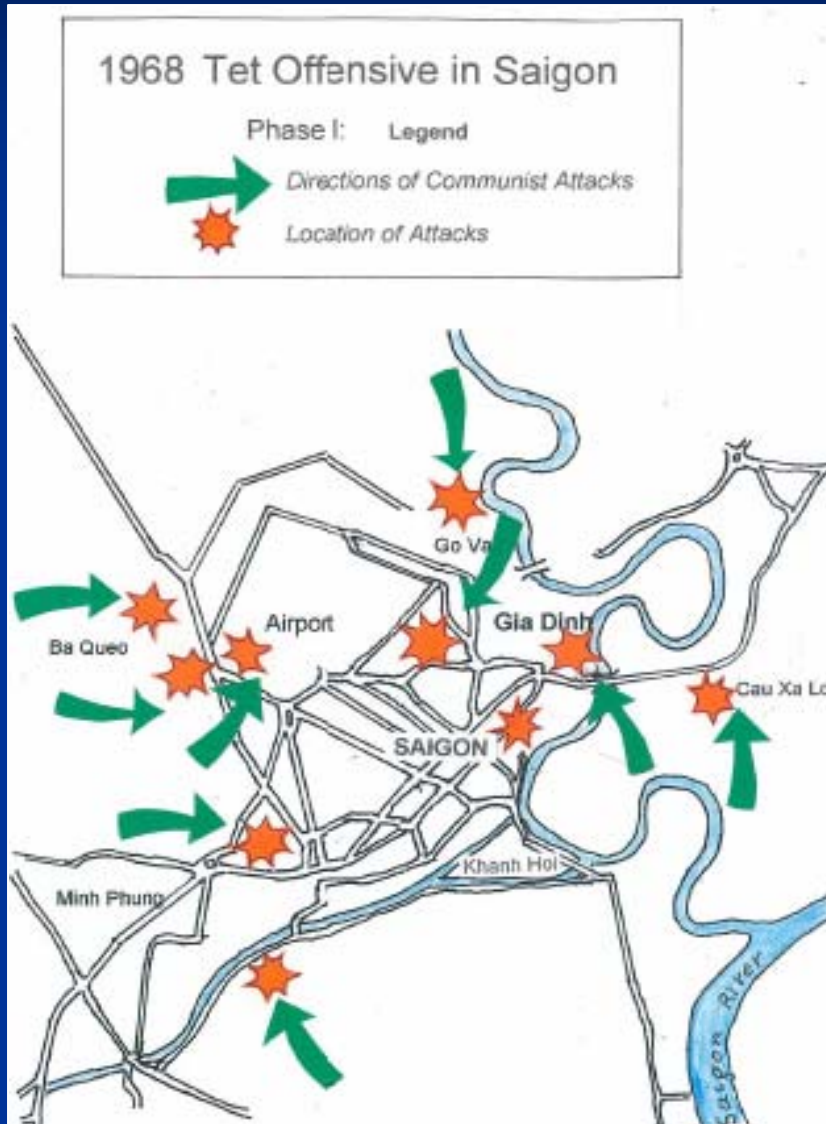
■ General Offensive

- 25 Major Cities
- Several minor cities, townships

■ Total forces committed

- 97 independent battalions
- Many commando units
- Six others Main Force regiments

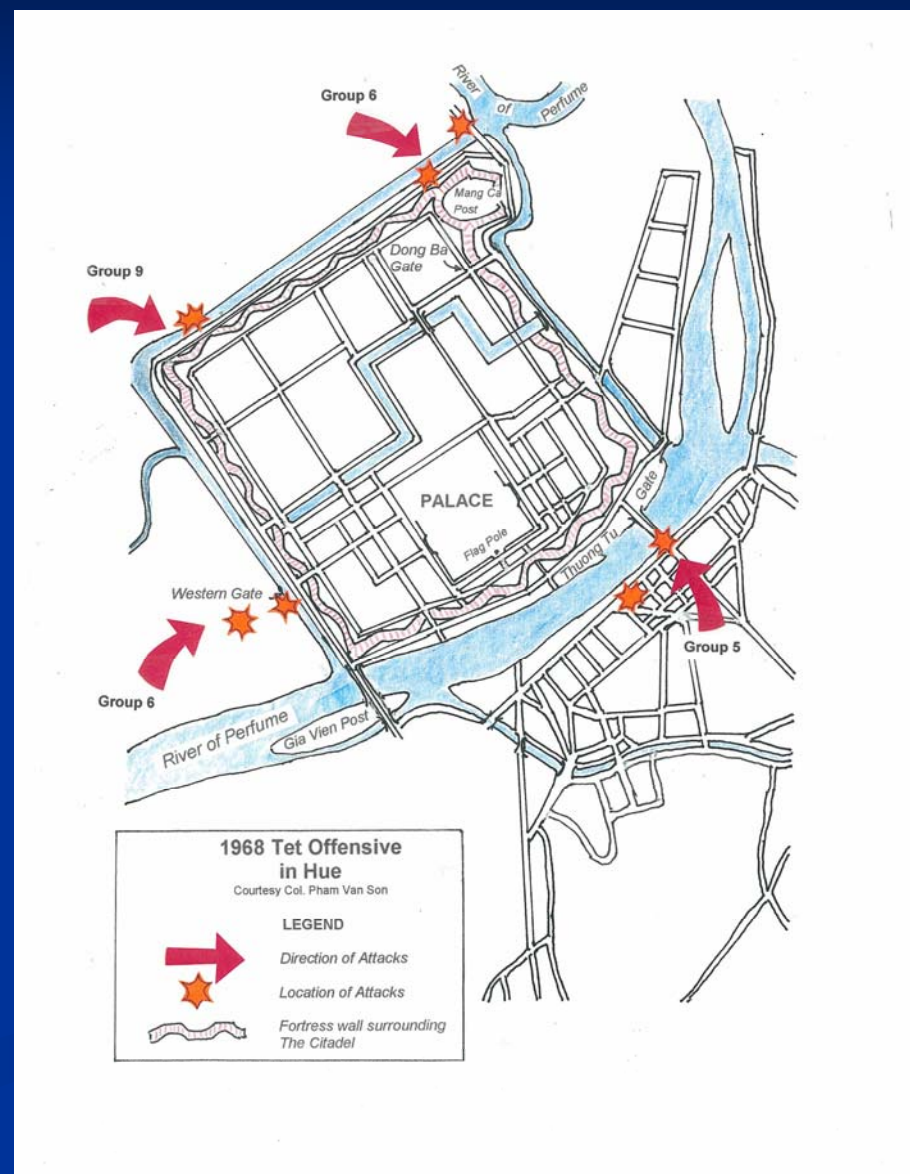
OFFENSIVE: in Saigon Capital



- 15 Communist battalions (6000 in strength)
- 2 commando battalions
- Main targets:

OFFENSIVE: Hue Theater

- 7,000 troops attack
- Communist seizing control of city
- Digging in the old fortified Citadel
- Occupation and massacre
- At least 3,000 victims of massacres



MILITARY CONSEQUENCES

- Combat Losses
- On the run
- Downward Trend
- Loss of sanctuaries
- Disintegrated infrastructure

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCE

- Weakened presence inside South Vietnam
- Gaining points on media scale
- Big political gain in Washington
- Paris peace talks

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

- Media and American intelligentsia
- Performance of the South Vietnamese Army.
- Communist atrocities and media collusion
- “WWII” versus “VN War” America